

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PQ

SUBJECT: LIAISON WITH CANAL ZONE: BLACKEN 9/17 SPEECH

SUMMARY: BLACKEN SPEECH, DELIVERED TO PACKED AUDIENCE OF 600-PLUS, WAS FOLLOWED BY QUESTION/ DISCUSSION PERIOD IN WHICH MOST VOCAL CONCERN APPEARED TO BE PROSPECT OF NATIONAL GUARD POLICE JURISDICTION APPLYING TO CANAL ZONE SUBSEQUENT TO NEW TREATY, ILLUSTRATED BY RECENT INCIDENT INVOLVING DETENTION BY GN OF A US ARMY LIEUTENANT. ASPECT MOST WELCOME TO ZONE RESIDENTS APPEARED TO BE EVIDENCE OF ACTIVE EFFORT TO CONSULT WITH THEM; IT ALSO APPEARS THAT CONTENT OF SPEECH HAS BEGUN TO REACH AT LEAST SOME. SEVERAL US PRESS CORRESPONDENTS, AND CBS-TV, WERE PRESENT FOR SPEECH. END SUMMARY.

1. POLCOUNS BLACKEN, IN FIRST MAJOR PUBLIC APPEARANCE INCAPACITY AS LIAISON BETWEEN US NEGOTIATORS AND CANAL ZONE, DELIVERED SPEECH (COPIES OF TEXT HAND-CARRIED BY AMB. BUNKER PARTY) ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 17 AT BALBOA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM. MEETING WAS ORGANIZED BY PACIFIC CIVIC COUNCILS. THERE WAS EXTENSIVE PRE-MEETING PUBLICITY WITHIN ZONE AND IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH PANAMA CITY PRESS. THE 600-SEAT CAPACITY HALL HAD AN OVERFLOW AUDIENCE WHICH LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ESTIMATED AT 750 PERSONS INCLUDING PEOPLE STANDING IN LOBBY AND AISLES. PRIOR TO MEETING, NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS PASSED OUT ASSORTED LITERATURE, MOSTLY
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IN OPPOSITION TO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, AT DOOR OF AUDITORIUM

(COPIES HAND-CARRIED BY BUNKER PARTY).

2. DURING QUESTION PERIOD FOLLOWING SPEECH, THERE WAS MUCH INTRANSIGENCE AND VERY LIMITED AMOUNT OF PERSONAL ABUSE, FOR WHICH MANY MEMBERS OF CIVIC COUNCILS APOLOGIZED AFTER MEETING. THIS COVERED IN NEWS ARTICLE APPEARING IN SEPTEMBER 18 ISSUES OF PANAMA CITY "STAR AND HERALD" (AND IN SPANISH IN COMPANION "ESTRELLA"), COPIES OF WHICH POUCHED ARA/PAN. PRINCIPAL POINTS OF ATTENTION INCLUDED:

A. FAMILIAR ARGUMENTS REGARDING ALLEGED STATUS OF ZONE AS US TERRITORY;

B. ALLEGATION THAT, IN ATTEMPTING TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS REGARDING NATURE OF PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT RAISED IN AUGUST MEETING WITH CIVIC COUNCIL LEADERS, BLACKEN AND STATE DEPARTMENT WERE "DEFENDING" GOP.

C. COMPARABLE ALLEGATION THAT "STATE DEPARTMENT" HAD SIMPLY ADOPTED GOP POSITION REGARDING TREATY.

D. QUESTION OF WHETHER CONCEPTUAL AGREEMENT TO DATE INDICATED ELIMINATION OF ZONE POLICE, FIRE, SCHOOLS AND OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES AND; IF SO, WHEN.

E. QUESTION OF WHETHER DOCUMENT CIRCULATING WITHIN ZONE PURPORTING TO BE TEXT OF "CONCEPTUAL AGREEMENTS" REACHED TO DATE WAS AUTHENTIC (BLACKEN DECLINED TO CONFIRM OR DENY).

3. MOST VOCAL CONCERN, AND PROBABLY MOST DAMAGING SINGLE ASPECT OF MEETING IN MINDS OF MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT, WAS IMPORT, IN TERMS OF SUBJECTION OF ZONE RESIDENTS TO PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD POLICE JURISDICTION, OF RECENT INCIDENT INVOLVING US ARMY LIEUTENANT. INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION WAS PRESIDENT OF LOCAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, AND WHILE OUT WATCHING BIRDS IN VICINITY OF GN INSTALLATION IN OLD PANAMA AREA OF PANAMA CITY WAS DETAINED BY GN FOR ALLEGED "INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY". QUESTION WAS RAISED INITIALLY BY A MEMBER OF AUDIENCE AND ANSWERED BY BLACKEN, WHO CITED INFORMATION FROM US MILITARY IN CANAL ZONE TO EFFECT THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INDIVIDUAL HAD BEEN WARNED AWAY FROM AREA PREVIOUSLY BY GN, AND THAT HE HAD HAD CAMERA IN HIS POSSESSION AT TIME. THE LIEUTENANT HIMSELF THEN ARRIVED AT AUDITORIUM, REQUESTED FLOOR, AND IN HIS VERSION OF INCIDENT SPECIFICALLY DENIED THAT HE HAD EVER BEEN WARNED AWAY BY GN AND DENIED HAVING HAD CAMERA. (FYI: INFORMATION REGARDING CAMERA WAS PUBLISHED IN 193RD INFANTRY BRIGADE INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR SEPTEMBER 16; ONE REPORTER FROM LOCAL PAPER WHO INQUIRED WHERE INFORMATION CITED BY BLACKEN CAME

FROM HAS BEEN REFERRED TO US MILITARY PUBLIC INFORMATION SOURCES
IN CANAL ZONE FOR COMMENT. END FYI)

4. AS NOTED ABOVE, SESSION RECEIVED EXTENSIVE LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE
IN PANAMA "STAR AND HERALD" AND COMPANION SPANISH-LANGUAGE
"ESTRELLA" ON BOTH SEPTEMBER 17 AND SEP 18. PRO-GOP
"MATUTINO" AND PANAMA AMERICA" HAVE BEEN SILENT THROUGH
MORNING SEPTEMBER 18; PRO-GOP "CRITICA" CARRIED ABOUT FIVE
PARAS ON SEPTEMBER 18, CONTAINED WITHIN ARTICLE DEALING WITH
OTHER ASPECTS OF NEGOTIATIONS. THIS COVERAGE PORTRAYED ZONE
AUDIENCE VERY UNFAVORABLY, STATING ERRONEOUSLY THAT AUDIENCE
REACTION HAD FORCED BLACKEN TO SUSPEND HIS SPEECH.

5. ALSO PRESENT AT SESSION WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF FOLLOWING
US PUBLICATIONS: "NEWSWEEK"; "WASHINGTON POST"; "CHICAGO
NEWS"; OTHER MAY HAVE BEEN THERE AS WELL. IN ADDITION, CBS
TV NETWORK HAD CAMERAS ON SCENE; SUBSEQUENT TO CLOSE OF
SESSION, WE HAVE HEARD THAT THEY OBTAINED ADDITIONAL FOOTAGE
FROM TWO MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE WHO SPOKE: AN OLDER MAN WHO HAD
AGGRESSIVELY PURSUED QUESTIONING ABOUT WHETHER SCHOOLS, POLICE AND
FIRE SERVICES WOULD BE ELIMINATED AND, HAVING STATED THAT HE
HAD BEEN ON ISTHMUS FOR OVER 40 YEARS, REMARKED
THAT HE HAD FORGOTTEN MORE ABOUT PANAMA THAN BLACKEN HAD EVER
KNOWN, AND A WOMAN WHO CLOSED
SESSION WITH REMARK (SUBJECT OF APOLOGIES LATER)
THAT BLACKEN'S PINK SHIRT HAD APPEARED STEADILY MORE RED TO HER
AS HE SPOKE. COMMENT: THEY WERE PROBABLY THE MOST VISIBLY
SPECTACULAR MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE, BUT EVEN GIVEN GENERAL AIR OF
INTRANSIGENCE, THEY WERE UNUSUALLY AND UNTYPICALLY EXTREME CASES.
END COMMENT.

6. FORM COMMENTS MADE SINCE MEETING, IT APPEARS THAT MOST
WELCOME ASPECT OF SPEECH, FROM VIEWPOINT OF CANAL ZONE RESIDENTS,
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WAS ITS FIRM INDICATION THAT BLACKEN INTENDED TO REMAIN BOTH
AVAILABLE AND ACTIVE IN LIAISON ROLE, THUS SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO
CONCERN SHARED BY MOST RESIDENTS THERE THAT "STATE DEPARTMENT"
IS NOT TALKING TO THEM AND THUS, BY IMPLICATION, DOES NOT CARE.
IN ADDITION, AS EVIDENCED BY NUMBER OF PHONE CALLS AND VISITS
TO EMBASSY BY PERSONS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE
SPEECH, WE HAVE FEELING THAT CONTENT OF SPEECH HAS BEGUN TO
REACH AT LEAST SOME ZONE RESIDENTS, AND WILL PROBABLY REACH
MORE AS IT IS READ BY THEM AGAIN (EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS WERE
PUBLISHED BY "STAR AND HERALD" ON SEPTEMBER 17 AND FULL TEXT
IN SEPTEMBER 18 ISSUE). IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A USEFUL AND,
ON THE WHOLE, A HOPEFUL STEP.
JORDEN

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TAGS: PFOR, PQ, PN, (BLACKEN, JOHN D)
To: STATE
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